

# WOMEN BUILDERS of JAPANESE PROSPERITY



*Carpet Weaving Is a Notable Industry.*  
(Photo From Phila. Commercial Museum)

## Their Increasing Share in Enlarging the Nation's Industries

**L**ITTLE girls — little almond-eyed girls, dressed in old, soiled kimonos — in long rows, busily swaying to and fro, passing baskets one to the other. Little girls who never talk while they work, who labor from early morning until late at night, filling the hold of a great ocean liner with coal. Little creatures, alas! not the living ideals of Japan's "flower garden of girls" we see in pictures, but the real girl-workers of Japan.

This is the sight you would see every day during the entire year at the port of Nagasaki, where women and children engage in coal-heaving. You may judge how fast they work when the average labor of a crew of, say, thirty girls is the loading of 1600 tons a day.

Little girls! Coal-heaving! You seem surprised. But this is only one industry in which the women of the Flowery Kingdom take a leading part.

Oh, yes, in our idealizing of the Japs we have overlooked an important but prosaic, even sordid, factor in their national economy—the labor of their women. And it is the labor of the women that is carrying Japan along, with the weight of a war debt, to an era of prosperity.

**"M**OST of the goods exported from this country are made by Japanese women," recently declared Manager Toyowaka, of the Mitsui Bishi Bank, of Japan.

"The men of this country are going in for the professions, for more complicated labors. They are studying electrical engineering, ship-building; they are becoming chemists, doctors, dentists, mathematicians. They are going into the iron industry, and making it a scientific study. Engineering engages their attention.

"The men of our country are no longer satisfied to dump coal and dig in the mines. It is their duty to take up the higher lines of work. Today you will find our young men studying in the colleges of the United States, England, Germany and France. You will find them working in the shipyards of the United States. You will find them in the steel mills. They are preparing to make Japan great—fit to take her place commercially with other nations.

"So the labor of the country—on whom does it fall? The women. The women today make most of the goods exported. Since the war with Russia they have put their shoulders to the wheel. They are doing splendid work.

"For centuries the women of Japan have labored. In the tea, silk weaving and light industries female labor has been almost wholly required. But they are now taking up more difficult lines of labor—hard labor, if you please.

"There has never been a stronger and weaker sex in Japan. Work always has been regarded as an inalienable right of our women. They do it gladly. They bear it well."

The words of the noted financier bring to the attention of the world the part of the women of Japan in re-establishing the prosperity of the kingdom. Like busy bees, the women of the country are going to work, making prosperity's honey in a country which has suffered greatly from the depletions of a terrible war.

Suppose we take a trip to the new Japan and observe the little ladies, not as we view them in picture books, but as they are at work!

On hot, sizzling days in summer and blizzard days in winter the women coal-heavers of Nagasaki are at work. Early each morning the women and girls of Kogakura, Shikimi or Takuda travel by road or boat to Nagasaki. Coal



*A Skillful Little Umbrella Maker.*



is brought from Takishima, Shimomoseki and Takasaka on lighters. These are towed alongside the ships, and the day's labor begins. Now, fair lady, you who go to bed at night with hands and face covered with cold cream, how would you like to stand all day passing baskets holding fifteen pounds of coal over your head—for a pay of 20 cents? Not at all!

Or would you prefer a job on the fisheries that line the coast of the nation? Here is another industry which, of recent years, has been monopolized by women. The fisheries form one of the most important and profitable industries in the country; the product of dried fish in 1903 amounted in value to \$6,196,000; in fish oil to

\$6,518,300, and table salt, \$4,713,416. The total value of marine products in 1900 amounted to \$16,362,705, and the takes of fish to \$28,416,875. Along the coasts you will see thousands of men and women—mostly women—engaged in fishing. From March to May they engage in catching herring. In one year the value of these fish amounted to nearly \$4,000,000. Sardines, bonito, tunnies, cod, mackerel, lobsters are among the fish caught in great quantities. The sardine brings Japan about \$3,700,000 annually, and the bonito \$2,000,000.

Out in boats on the seething waters women



*Collecting Cocoons for a Silk Mill.*  
(Photo From Phila. Commercial Museum)



*Women Are Enlarging Market Activities.*

Sans and Cherry Blossoms must mean to this country, you must remember that Japan manufactures goods not only for her own use, but for the world. And the world is taking her stuffs. In 1890 the exports of cotton yarns, towels, flannels, silk handkerchiefs and crepes amounted in value to \$12,500,000, an increase of 50 per cent. over the export of 1885. Silk, cotton and textile goods manufactured in 1901 amounted in value to \$76,797,959.

Cotton spinning mills numbered seventy-six in 1903. There were employed in these 57,166 women, against 13,160 men.

An important and profitable industry monopolized by the women is the manufacture of umbrellas. Enter a factory. Rows upon rows of women, dressed in modest kimonos, with sleeves rolled up, put together the wire ribs, cover them with silk, often embroidering the covers with the delicate imageries for which Japan is noted. The export of umbrellas has increased to \$691,237 from practically nothing in 1885.

Visit the match factories, and you will find women dipping matches and enabling the country to export nearly \$5,000,000 worth within one year.

Matting is shipped to Europe and America, bringing into the country more than \$2,000,000.

Plaited straw, made by the women, brings an equal amount of money. And leather goods, including pocketbooks, purses and satchels, turned out by the dainty hands of women, increase the country's income by more than a half million.

In the rice districts of Nippon you will often find women plowing knee deep in water-covered land. The rice farm is cut up into patches and inundated. Rice thrives only when the field is covered with six inches or more of water. Difficult work this, but when the soldiers were fighting the wives and daughters gladly went to the fields. They faced the alternative of working or starving.

For years they have labored in the tea fields and tea houses. And the income exceeding \$6,000,000 from this industry is largely creditable to the women.

So in all the important industries the women of Japan are doing astonishing work—and then some!

Not only in the factories, mills and fields, but in the schools, in hospitals, in the realm of art. During the Russo-Japanese War 10,000 women were ready to volunteer for service. Today they teach in the schools and nurse in the hospitals. They dominate the stage, where Japanese art is especially influenced by foreign nations.

The theater was founded in the twelfth century in Japan by women. Led by the Priestess Okoumi, troupes of women appeared and took part in the mythological dramas of Nippon. For some reason this was not favored, and a royal decree a half century later placed the ban on women appearing on the stage. Then the men took possession of the boards.

Several centuries later, however, women again took up roles, never appearing, however, with the men. But with the sudden awakening of Japan a change came, and in 1900 Sada Yacco, a beautiful Japanese actress, went to Paris and appeared in a play with men.

draw the nets. Along the coast at low tide, with their children, you can see them scraping the sand and digging for crabs and edible sea weeds. In the marshes and bays you will see them working, too. You may grasp an idea of the extent of the industry when the number of fishing boats in use number 420,000.

But it is not in the coal and fishing industries that the women have made the most notable advancement in the work of their country. Rather have they made the most astonishing invasion in the field of manufacture, in the mills and factories, at the looms, and in the making of small articles of merchandise.

Since the war Japan has exhibited remarkable progress in manufacture. With the wheat fields of Manchuria at her disposal, and the agricultural facilities of Korea to draw upon, doubtless she has determined to make of her own country a manufacturing center in the world's market.

You are in Japan, and silk mills are going up before your eyes; umbrella factories turn out rain-protectors for Europe; you observe them engaging in the manufacture of soaps, matches, leather goods, clocks, cotton materials and furniture. An era of industry has begun.

But while you will find the men, often under the direction of foreign engineers and architects, putting up buildings, you will find the women doing the work in the newly erected factories, putting together dainty bits of bric-a-brac, furniture, weaving carpet, spinning silk and designing toys.

The imitative faculty of the wily Jap is well known. In Nippon you will observe the results of imitation. You will see them making furniture after mission styles, using German models for toys, and turning out carpets equaling in quality those of the mills of Kensington.

And most of this work is being done by women.

To appreciate what the labor of the fair

*They Handle Much of the Rice Crops*